

Report of the Town of Amherst Solid Waste Task Force
Executive Summary
October 18, 2004

Introduction

This document contains an executive summary of the report prepared by the Solid Waste Task Force of the town of Amherst, NH. It is based on a draft version of the full report, and is only intended to convey in general terms, the findings and recommendations of the Task Force. Information was collected from many different sources, including the State of New Hampshire, local survey data, NH The Beautiful, the Souhegan Regional Landfill District (SRLD), the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and visits to each neighboring town's waste disposal operation.

Purpose of the Task Force

Members of the Solid Waste Task Force were appointed by the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Amherst. The Task Force was charged with evaluating the manner in which the Town of Amherst disposes of solid waste at the transfer station operated by the Amherst Department of Public Works. Areas included in the evaluation were the transfer station itself (physical layout, condition, type and amount of equipment currently in use, number of employees required), types of solid waste accepted, how the different kinds of waste are disposed of, trends in the amount and kinds of waste disposed of, trends in the cost of waste disposal and cost implications of any changes we recommend.

Summary of Findings

Background

The Department of Public Works currently staffs the Transfer Station 29 hours per week with one full-time and 3 or 4 part-time employees, for a total of 127 man-hours per week. On Saturday, the busiest day of the week, employees are hard pressed to find time for lunch and bathroom breaks and it is common, especially around holidays, for traffic to completely fill the driveway and back up onto Route 101. Consistent increases in town population and in the amount of trash disposed of at the site, coupled with a negligible increase (or in some years, a decrease) in the percentage of the waste stream that is recycled, indicate that we can expect disposal costs, congestion, and personnel costs to continue to increase.

In addition to household trash, the Transfer Station also accepts many recyclable materials, some of which users are required to pay for. Currently, the following items are accepted for recycling:

- plastics #1 and #2
- glass bottles and jars
- tin and aluminum cans
- newspapers and magazines
- car/truck tires (disposal fee)
- car batteries
- scrap metal
- electronics (fee for picture tubes)
- demolition/construction debris (disposal fee)
- propane cylinders (disposal fee)
- refrigerators and air conditioners (disposal fee)
- textiles

significantly, leading to the conclusion that it is unlikely to increase without some incentive for change. The current facility is already over-utilized at peak times; without action on the part of the Town, there is no reason to expect any improvement, given the projected increases in use. Thus, we can expect longer lines, more traffic congestion, traffic backing up onto Route 101 more often and the necessity for additional staff and equipment to handle the increased workload. All of this translates directly into steadily increasing costs, continuing indefinitely.

Options Considered

The Task Force considered numerous possible methods of limiting or reducing costs associated with solid waste disposal, including mandatory recycling, pay-as-you-throw, curbside pickup, education, and facility improvements. A complete evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each can be found in the final report.

Summary of Recommendations

The Task Force feels that a two-pronged approach is necessary in order to realize the maximum reduction in costs. Changes to the physical facility coupled with an education effort are aimed at encouraging town residents to recycle more. The physical changes will make it much easier (one stop for recycling and trash disposal) and the education effort will emphasize the cost savings and ecological benefits realized by recycling.

Facility Improvements

A number of modifications to the transfer station are proposed in order to improve the operational efficiency of the site. Facility improvements include modifications to site access, traffic flow, operating capacity and layout.

The existing two-way driveway should be widened to accommodate one additional lane of traffic and converted to one-way traffic, serving as the transfer station entrance.

A two-lane exit driveway to Route 101 should be added approximately 550 feet north (east on Route 101) of the existing driveway. Based on discussions with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, roadway improvements to Route 101 are not anticipated, however additional traffic warning signs may be required.

Equally important is the combination of the three separate operational areas into a single drop-off area for both waste disposal and recycling. The proposed plan increases ease-of-use and efficiency and decreases congestion, by providing a one-way, semi-circular traffic pattern with increased traffic capacity, combined disposal/recycling areas and separation of commercial (truck) traffic from "user" traffic. These improvements will be accomplished with the construction of the following components:

- Modular pre-cast concrete block wall to provide grade separation and physical barrier between the disposal containers and residents.
- Solid waste, recycling and bulk disposal will be accessible from one drop-off location.
- Modular pre-cast concrete block bins will be created to accommodate scrap metal, brush and miscellaneous storage.

Amherst Transfer Facility **Proposed Improvements**

Cost Estimates and Construction Phasing

Phase 1.	Budget Estimate
Construct exit access and re-grade detention basin (includes engineering effort necessary for NHDOT driveway and for environmental permitting for entire site)	\$60,000
Phase 2	
Construct 5 drop-off/collection sites in vicinity of existing demolition area	\$185,000
Phase 3	
Construct 4 drop-off/collection sites in vicinity of existing compactors	\$100,000
Phase 4	
Reconstruct existing entrance to add traffic lane (total of 3 entrance lanes)	\$25,000
Total of Four Phases	<u>\$370,000</u>
Other Options:	
1. Move the scale house to improve site circulation, a new scale house would be required	\$40,000
2. Construct roofs over drop-off areas for weather protection	
in-house labor (materials only)	\$11,000
outside contractor (labor and materials)	\$72,000
3. Pave parking and drop-off areas (shaded areas on plans) 3" pavement thickness	\$70,000
4. Large message board at facility (education)	\$10,000

These budget figures assume that project management and most labor will be supplied by the Amherst DPW.

Funding for a substantial portion of the materials costs is expected to come from the SRLD, which has presently earmarked \$200,000 towards improvements at the Amherst transfer station.